Sūrah al Kahf: A Multiple Literary Approaches Reading

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Abstract

The study aims at providing insight into the interpretation of sūrah al Kahf in Holy Qur'ān through traditional literary approaches: historical and biographical approach and moral and philosophical approach. For the analysis, the approaches ponder over the historical and biographical context and reference as well as consider the moral and philosophical teachings as the core purpose of the literary text. Āyāt 'Verses' are discussed in the light of the approaches in separate sections. The analysis shows a reciprocal relationship and their interdependency among the approaches due to the fact that historical approach validates the biographical accounts narrated in the sūarh that further guides towards the philosophy of the existence of the one and only Allah (swt) as the Creator. In connection with historical account, philosophies of good and bad, right and wrong, the logical reasoning behind the purpose of life, the life and death and the life after death are also explained. The philosophical reasoning leads towards the morality and ethical teachings. The literary approaches are significant to study the eloquence of Qur'ān and suggested for further analysis with reference to other sūrahs.

Keywords: Qur'ān, Surah al Kahf, Historical and Biographical Approach, Moral and Philosophical Approach.

Introduction:

The Holy Qur'ān, the sacred and divine book of Muslims, is not only a hub of knowledge but also encompasses literary currency. Its aesthetic value and literary charm appeal to many scholars from varied disciplines[1]. Western linguists have studied the Qur'ān with varied perspectives, such as Robinson's[2] study on unveiling the messages of Qur'ān, Tzortzis'[3] work on miraculous nature of literary and linguistic features of the Qur'ān, Patterson's[4] research on Islam from a Christian's point of view are to name a few. Similarly, Arab rhetoricians applied an advanced version of traditional discourse mechanics of *ethos, pathos* and *logos* into three rhetoric disciplines namely; *al Ma'āni, al Bayān,* and *al Badī'.* The three dimensions incorporate the discourse and socio-cultural studies of meaning, the study of figures of speech (related to literature) and the study of literariness of the Qur'ān respectively[5].

In the course of studies, another debate also undergoes about the generic position of the Qur'ān as a piece of literature or as a spoken discourse[6]. Believing in it as a true and final word of God (henceforth *Allah*), the communicative value is supported yet the literary content with an unmatched eloquence in the shape of written scripture for the guidance of mankind reinforced its literary position[7]. Although some conventional Muslims deny its literary position, yet the literal meaning of the Arabic word, 'Qur'ān' is '(continuously) read/recited and/or to be read/recited'[8]. The very first word of the Qur'ān revealed on the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was *iqra* 'read/recite'. Keeping in view, the study focuses on the reading from multiple literary approaches and shall look into sūrah al Kahf accordingly.

The Holy Book is divided into chapters which contain different sūrahs containing multiple verses. The particular sūrah is selected for the analysis due to its richness of the description of historical events that are of paramount importance, not only exclusively for

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Muslims but also for Christians and Jews (e.g. *the sleepers of the cave*). The stories of the sūrah also impart philosophical underpinnings for the sake of moral teachings. Their description plays a pivotal role in the authenticity of its divinity and truth and as a source of guidance.

Generally, written languages differ from their spoken form, but it is the exclusive beauty of Qur'ānic speech which enjoys the authenticity of colloquial spoken Arabic distinguishing it from other languages[9]. However, it is an agreed upon rule that the eloquence of Qur'ān is not completely translatable (ibid). The untranslatable trait of original text is also a known fact by many linguists and scholars. When there raises the question of authenticity of the translation of Qur'ān, in Tibawi's[10] opinion, each translation of the Holy book holds, to different extent, its insufficiency.

The message of the Qur'ān is universal and it addresses all mankind irrespective of time and place[11]. That is why, the translators take pains to interpret its meaning to possible level in order to understand and circulate its divine message.

The languages other than Arabic can only present a shadow of meaning. Due to its *translation-resistant* nature, It is the problem faced by many scholars (Muslims and non-Muslims) studying its linguistic, stylistic and pragmatic dimensions with respect to different languages and cultures[12].

But this is not the focus of the present study, as it provides a reading of the Sūrah with the lens of literary approaches. The objective of the study is to appreciate the eloquence and richness of Qur'ān with the help of traditional approaches. It aims at providing an insight from literary perspective adding new dimension to the existing body of knowledge with particular reference to Surah al Kahf. For the purpose, various features in the Sūrah are highlighted with reference to particular verses. The references related to different interpretations are given during discussion where needed.

A number of studies on the richness and eloquence of Qur'ān are available with respect to different genres and Sūrahs. The upcoming section provides an overview of the related literature with respect to Sūrah al Kahf.

Other Works on the Sūrah :

The study of the Holy Qur'ān with multiple perspectives and approaches remains a common practice in the fields of linguistics and literature. It ranges from textual analysis to stylistic analysis, from shift analysis to discourse analysis, from feminist perspective to Christian view, the diversity attracts the scholars and invites them to ponder over it[13]. The Qur'ānic Sūrahs carry strong and rich messages for human beings. It is the miraculous word of Allah (swt) meant for the guidance with the description of historical events and the narrative of Prophets of Allah (swt) where needed. Furthermore, it encompasses the perseverance of the immediate context related to the time of revelation which needs to be studied with different approaches.

Sūrat al Kahf (the cave) has been studied with different perspectives. Bajwa[14] studies it with respect to narrative inquiry in order to explain the function of narrative in the Holy Qur'ān. She rules out the effectiveness of literary analysis based on textual inquiry regarding imparting deep down understanding of narrative scholarship of the Holy Book. She relates the narrative exploration of the Sūrah with the attributive names of Allah (swt). Her thesis provides a deep insight into the style and strategies of storytelling in the Qur'ān and opens the gates for further studies. Her study presents a different dimension.

The current researcher intends to provide new exegesis of the Sūrah through diverse theoretical lens.

The studies on the Sūrah are not restricted to the field of linguistics, rather they also analyzed in the realm of literature. For example, Anas et al[15] analyzed the rhetorical devices used in the story of *the sleepers of the cave* with detailed discussion. Their study highly appreciates the narrative strategies used in the story and highpoints the rhetorical techniques to provoke the interest of the reader.

Gökkir[16] presents a critical review of the available literature on the studies of Qur'ān and the influence of western theoretical underpinnings. He offers the literary criticism with respect to the advancement in technology and the assault of modernization and westernization as contemporary challenges to the exegesis of the Qur'ān. He quotes the works of modern Muslim scholars who offer the interpretations with the help of western theories and highpoints their merits and demerits. He concludes by suggesting critical historical methodology for the interpretation of the Qur'ān in order to understand the meaning with historical and contemporary contexts which is incorporated in the present study.

Likewise, Usman[17] analyses selected verses of the Sūrah on semantic level and applies corpus based grammatical class finding methods with qualitative discussion. His study restricts itself to only the story of *aṣḥāb al- Kahf (the sleepers of the cave).* He states that in different religions the story is narrated with different details and his study provides a platform to tell it with reference to the Qurā'nic verses. The theoretical variation in the study of the Sūrah instigates the present researcher to offer a new dimension to the existing body of knowledge.

Similarly, Fatahizadeh and Zakeri[18] study the Sūrah with Structuralists approach and analyse the descriptions of surface and deep structures (linguistic and semantic levels) with respect to three guiding principles of *unity, variety and harmony* within the text. They critically discuss the stories narrated in the Sūrah with theoretical debate and relate the units of language with the elements of meaning, the former as discrete and the latter as distance. Their study strengthens the present researcher's affirmation regarding the depth and richness of the glorious Qur'ān offering itself for reading with varied perspectives and approaches.

Another thought provoking work of Yahya[19] is found which not only discusses the *signs* of the Day of Judgment with reference to the Sūrah but also challenges and ultimately refutes the Darwinian theory of evolution. The study explicates the discussion- for strengthening the claims- with cross-referencing with other verses from various Sūrahs. It ponders over the present researcher's understanding of the subject matter and offers theoretical insight.

In the light of the above pieces of research, it is perceived that the Sūrah needs to be further researched with literary perspective. The overview of previous studies instigates the present study towards the analysis of the Sūrah with traditional literary approaches, including the historical approach as suggested by Gökkir[20], which are mentioned in the next section.

2.1 Research Methodology:

The study applies two literary approaches during the analysis: Historical and Biographical Approach, and Moral and Philosophical Approach. The first approach focusses on the impact of the lifetime and the span of lifetime of the author of the literary piece of work

under study (biographical approach) and taking in consideration the historical happenings of the setting of the particular literary work apart from the author's lifetime (historical approach) (Guerin)[21]. In other words, it refers to the study of the literature with respect to the author's era as well as the era described in the very piece of literature while analyzing the text.

The second approach applied in the study takes into account the morality based philosophical teachings presented in a literary work.

The Sūrah contains 110 āyāt. The study discusses the details given in the Sūrah with reference to the particular approach and does not focus on the exegesis of the Sūrah *āyat to āyat* 'verse to verse'. It rather mentions the āyāt number and discusses accordingly describing the features highlighted by the particular approach.

The upcoming section presents a detailed discussion on multifarious features of the Sūrah through the lens of multiple approaches.

Discussion:

Sūrat al Kahf is chapter eighteen, selected for the study. It encompasses narratives of past events, prophets' experiences, stories of knowledgeable and righteous people, and parables for the guidance of humanity. The background or the context of situation in which the Sūrah revealed provides strong historical, biographical, moral and philosophical instances. The *Quraysh* (pagan Arabs) sent their representatives to the *rabbis of Jews* of Madina in order to confirm the prophet-hood of Muḥammad (saw). There, they told them to ask from Muḥammad (saw) about three issues and if he replies correctly, he is a true messenger of Allah (swt): firstly about the disappeared youth of early times, secondly about a man who travelled from east to west horizons of the globe, and thirdly about the soul. On the instigation of the Jews, *Quraysh* put these questions before the Prophet (saw). In reply to the said queries, the Sūrah was revealed ('Abd al-Rashīd)[22] but with a delay that will be discussed in the upcoming sections. After the brief description of the context of the Sūrah, the discussion on verses with reference to the approaches is as under.

3.1 Historical and Biographical Approach:

Sūrat al-Kahf posits ample examples when read through this particular lens. First of all, it is to clear here that the glorious Qur'ān is the word of Allah (swt) revealed on the prophet Muḥammad (saw). Allah (swt) is the omniscient Narrator of the Qur'ān (Bajwa)[23]. While studying any text with the historical and biographical approach, the age and era and the happenings of the author's life and the text are considered very significant. In this particular case, Allah (swt) Himself being the Narrator describes His attributes, which is free from the restriction of time and space. Similarly, the universality of the message of Qur'ān is free from time and place. This is not something particularly attached to the religion of Islam and its believers, rather it is also the belief of the Christians regarding Bible. They affirm it as true word of God sent for the guidance of humanity as mentioned by Jambrek and Jambrek[24] in their study on the role of the Holy Bible in day to day life.

The divinely revealed Books are descended by Allah (swt) and Muslims have a firm believe on it but other than Qur'ān, the rest are later subject to human intervention. The purity of Qur'ān is a miracle and no one could find any crookedness in it which is claimed with biographical evidence in the very first āyāt (verse) of the Sūrah. Here, the Sūrah opens with the description of the narrator of the text.

The āyah-1 tells us about the absolute authority of the authorship of the Holy Book, which is free from any error. The first part of the verse indicates towards the attribute of Allah (swt) that the praise belongs to Allah (swt). The historical context actually confirms the praiseworthiness of The Creator. It informs about the challenge that was given by the Qur'ān, particularly to the Arabs and generally to rest of the non-believers that if they have some doubt about its divinity then bring a scripture likewise or even a Sūrah or āyāt (al-Baqarah 23). And in the subsequent āyah, it is told that they cannot do that, even if they take help from others. This miraculous nature of the Holy Book endorses the sanctity and authority of its Narrator.

The succeeding āyāt (verses) describe the attributes of the Book (Qur'ān) that is said to be *the Book of Justice* that warns to the disbelievers from the punishment and gives good-tiding to the doers of good deeds (āyah-2). It also warns to those who blamed Allah (swt) for having a son (āyah-4). Qur'ān denies the polytheism and also refutes the Christians claim of trinity. The historical detail also supports the claim that Jesus Christ never claimed of being the son of the God. It is best debated by Zarley[25] with reference to the verse John 10.30 quoted by Christians as a proof of their belief. However, for the assertion of the declaration, Allah (swt) supplements that neither they nor their forefathers have the knowledge and that *kaburat kalimatan takhruju min afwāhihim*, "it is a grave talk that is uttered from their mouths". It is actually the greatest sin that is based on a sheer lie. Here, Allah (swt) exhibits His absolute knowledge of the truth, the past and the false assumption of Christians. It ultimately points to the oneness of Allah (swt). In this way, the historical evidence supports the biographical claim of the Narrator.

After the description of the Narrator, His power and absolute authority, He puts forth the defining narrative of the Sūrah in āyah-8 and proclaims that "*aṣḥāb al kahfi war raqīmi kānū min āyātinā 'ajabā", that aṣḥāb al Kahf* were among His magnificent signs. Here again, Allah (swt) provides us with biographical historical proof through the story of *aṣḥāb al Kahf* which is irrefutable due to the fact that it traces back from Greek to Syrians and then to Romans (van der Horst)[26]. It found its way into Christian tradition as well as in old and modern English literature (Schmidt)[27].

Further information that the Qur'ān imparts is *war Raqīmi* "the inscription" that points out towards the written detail inscribed at the door of the cave. The historical description of the story communicates that after the awakening, the sleepers found themselves in the cave with the inscription, which was a proof of their long hibernation and their righteous escape from the pagan ruler.

Moreover *aṣḥāb al Kahf* are called *fityatun* "the youth" that is a plural masculine nominative noun (āyah-10) which informs about their young age, henceforth, their physical strength. Other details, such as their names and number are not mentioned and kept in secret. It is also mentioned that they were guided by Allah (swt) and they had a firm belief in Allah (swt). Their physical strength complemented their spiritual strength to take stand against the odds of their time and to flee from the impending danger and taking refuge with the help of Allah (swt). The fact not only provides historical detail but also validates the biographical claim. The power of Allah (swt) is also depicted through their successful escape as well as well from their long slumber without any disturbance.

Another sign of Allah (swt) is given in āyah- 17: *al-shamsa idhā ṭala'at tazāwaru* "the sun when it rose inclining away" that Allah (swt) made arrangement for *aṣḥāb's* long slumber in which they were protected even from the sunrays and their sides were turned as if they

were awaking (āyah-18). Furthermore, the sign of the life after death is also provided by the awakening of the *aṣḥāb al Kahf* and anymore arguments are prohibited by Allah (swt). So in this way, the historical and biographical accounts draw the attention of the reader to the core of the story.

The Sūrah also narrates another story with historical details and that is of the man with two horns. The āyah-83 begins with *wa yas'alūnaka 'an dhil Qarnayn* 'and they ask you about Dhu l-Qarnayn'. It validates the fact described as the context of the situation of the Sūrah that *Quraysh* asked Muḥammad (saw) about these stories.

The Sūrah provides the story in detail that how Dhu l-Qarnayn (AS) who was equipped with means for things, arrives at the place where people complain him about the cruel *Yājūj and Mājūj* (Gog and Magog). There, he builds a wall (barrier) to protect them from the invasion and looting of unkind *Yājūj and Mājūj*. The story has its roots in Persian and Chinese history and literature and to some people Dhu l-Qarnain was Alexander the Great (Netton)[28] and to some others Cyrus the Great. Al-Johani[29] refuted both of the claims with logical and historical facts. He travelled to the concerned places and gathered evidence against the claims. The historical details provided by the Qur'ān, put light on the attributes, authority and successful utilization of the resources as well as knowledge bestowed to Dhu l-Qarnayn and not about mere detail about his identity. In Tafsīr Ibn e Kathīr (Ibn e Kathīr [30]), in āyah-84'*wa a'aṭaynāhu min kulli shay'in sababā', sabab* is described as 'knowledge'. It was the knowledge of everything given to him by Allah (swt) through which he conquered the farfetched places as well as the hearts of their inhabitants even without knowing their language. He was named after the two horns that also have multiple explanations. Moreover, various versions of his era are available. According to Jews, he was a Roman who built Alexandria. This promulgation is refuted by Ibn Kathīr as Alexander-I was not Roman and he was at the age of *Ḥaḍrat Ibrāhīm AS (Abraham)* whereas Alexandaer-II was a Roman from whom the Roman history started, he lived three hundred years before The Christ (ibid). The Christian version is also repudiated due to the very fact.

In addition, there is another story told for the readers' recollection in āyah-50 in which the disobedience of *Iblīs* (Satan) is reminded and his origin is also told. The historical detail is briefly described that *Allah (swt)* ordered the angels to bow down in prostration before Adam (AS). All prostrated except for *Iblīs* who was a *Jinn* (genie). Due to his noncompliance, he was kicked out of the command of Allah (swt). With brevity, it is told that whosoever disobeys Allah (swt) goes out of His mercy. Historically speaking, the earliest trace of Satan is found in Jewish biblical tradition once an obedient angel, one of the members of *heavenly court* became a *rival* of God about 500 years later. The third version of the story (the *primeval Jewish 'the Life of Adam and Eve'*) matches the details narrated by the Qur'ān. On the other hand, according to New Testament in Christian tradition, Satan is the enemy of the Jesus and his followers (Pagels[31]) and the story of disobedience is mentioned even in *Milton's Paradise Lost*. In this way, the historical approach provides understanding of the stories and events narrated in the Sūrah.

Additionally, another influential story of Mūsā (Moses) AS and Khaḍir (AS) is told in the Sūrah. The exegesis by Ibn Kathīr[32] provides a historical background to the story that when Mūsā (AS) called himself the most knowledgeable person of Allah (swt) then he was informed about a more knowledgeable person than him and he wished to meet him. So, he embarked on the journey carrying the fish as indicator of the presence of that very

person and the entire incidents happened mentioned in the Sūrah (āyāt-60-82). There are multiple versions of the story in other traditions than Islam, particularly with respect to the details given for Khaḍir (AS) whose name is not told in the Sūrah. Some identify him as S. George, some other as saint Sergius of Armenia (Hasluck)[33]. In Turkish tradition, Khaḍir (AS) is recognized as Elias and/or the companion of Elias who travelled to the *fountain of life* from where they got immortality (Hasluck and Hasluck)[34]. Beside the identity of Khaḍir (AS) the incidents that took place during their journey are almost the same in Biblical tradition. One of the historical evidence is found in the Judaism in connection with the incident of killing a young boy by Khaḍir (AS). There was a law in Torah of stoning to death the disrespectful son which is interpreted in detail by Josephus[35]. To *honor thy father and mother* is said to be included in the *Ten Commandments* in Torah and it was a directive for the long life (Exodus 20:12 NIV). It is believed that after the incident of Khaḍir's (AS) killing of the boy, death penalty for cursing or striking the parents became the law. It validates the historical context given in the Sūrah.

All the stories not only encompass biographical and historical teachings but also contain moral and philosophical values that are said to be the core of a religious/divine literature. Moral and philosophical approaches locate ethical teachings out of literary texts in order to impart morality to the readers. The next section discusses them with reference to the above discussed stories along with others mentioned in the Sūrah.

3.2 Moral and Philosophical Approach:

Morality is the most significant trait of any religious text. Moral teaching with a philosophical approach is the magnificent style of the Qur'ān. Sūrat al Kahf contains a number of such instances. Some of them are discussed in this section.

The most important teaching is presented in the beginning of the Sūrah. The philosophy of punishment and reward is placed in the second and the third āyāt with warning about the forfeit of doing bad deeds and the reward for noble deeds and the assurance of the abode of the righteous people in the peace forever. In these verses, the teaching of doing good deeds is conveyed through the logical description of the consequences of bad deeds, so that the people might get inspiration of piety from the surety of never ending reward. The typical style of guiding is adopted here and it is made clear that there are two paths: one of doing good and having good and the second is doing bad and getting punishment. The matter is endorsed in the āyāt- 29-31 with a detailed description of the hell and the paradise and their inhabitants. In this way, at the very beginning of the Sūrah with supportive arguments in the subsequent āyāt, it is made clear that the only way of salvation is choosing the right path, the path of piety and devoutness.

The first story told in the Sūrah *the sleepers of the cave* comprises significant moral and philosophical features. Besides the details of the story discussed above, there are some philosophical accounts need to be highlighted. First of all, the philosophy of firm faith and guidance from Allah (swt) is exhibited. The opportunity and capability of choosing the right path is a special blessing of Allah (swt) which is bestowed to his chosen ones. It is told that how *aṣḥāb al- Kahf* were provided by the guidance what they asked for from Allah (swt) *'wa zidnāhum hudā'* (āyah-13) and it was increased due to their faith. In āyah-17, it is clearly mentioned that this is a sign of Allah (swt) that only those get the guidance to whom Allah (swt) wants to and those who are kept away from the guidance can never find any supporter and guide. The examples of the very fact are mentioned in āyāt- 16-18 that how *aṣḥāb al- Kahf* were entertained with the mercy of Allah (swt) and the

arrangement for their safe and sound slumber was made that even the sun inclined away from their cave during rising and setting. Similarly, in the case of the story of Dhu l-Qarnayn (AS), all the glory, success of conquests, abundance of resources and knowledge were awarded by Allah (swt) to Dhu l-Qarnayn (AS) because he was a just and righteous man.

It illustrates that faith in Allah (swt) and asking for his guidance are the keys to attain guidance and success and that authority of providence with *hidāyah* "guidance" rests with Allah (swt) (āyah-57).

Secondly, the philosophy of life after death is also unraveled through this story. *Aṣḥāb al-Kahf* woke up at the time, when people were in doubt about the life after death and their rise from a long slumber made it clear that Allah (swt) is the Almighty Who shall raise the dead on the Day of Judgment for the accountability of their deeds. The moral teaching imparted from the philosophy communicates that one needs to lead one's life in upright and virtuous manner to receive the everlasting rewards and to avoid never-ending punishment (āyāt 46-49).

Thirdly, it philosophically communicates that Allah (swt) is all knowing and the knowledge of unseen rests with only Him. As the matter of fact, we need not to argue over petty issues like the number, names and place of *aṣḥāb al-Kahf* and Dhu l-Qarnayn (AS), but rather need to know the reasons behind their high and respectable ranks and that are indeed the firmness of their faith and the mercy of Allah (swt).

The story of Mūsā (Moses) (AS) adds another dimension to this philosophy that the all-knowing Allah (swt) has the sole authority to bestow the knowledge to his chosen ones, as Khaḍir (AS) in the story was blessed with the knowledge (āyah-66) that was not granted to Mūsā (AS). The particular knowledge bestowed to Khaḍir (AS) also indicates towards the expedience behind the worldly affairs of day to day life which apparently seem unfavourable or unfortunate but their hidden value benefits us, so that the life goes on its routine successfully. It explicates that we need not to be hasty in judging the matters on our set standards and understanding. We rather need to keep patience and ask for Allah's mercy. Moreover, the submission to the erudite and respecting the knowledgeable is taught through the story that how Mūsā (AS) paid respect to Khaḍir (AS) and asked for what he did not know apart from his high status.

Fourthly, the philosophy of the will of Allah (swt) incorporating in all the matters is exhibited through āyāt 23-24 in which Allah (swt) teaches the etiquettes of saying *'in shā' Allāh* 'if Allah wills' and forbids saying that *I will do this tomorrow*. The direct addressee is the prophet Muḥammad (saw) who said so when he was asked those three questions by the *Quraysh* mentioned earlier. After that, the revelation suspended for some days and it put him in worry. After some days, it reinstated and asking for Allah's will was suggested ('Abd al-Rashīd,)[36]. The incident shows the ultimate glory of Allah (swt) and teaches us a lesson of always asking for the will of Allah (swt). It also exhibits the oneness of Allah (swt) that even his beloved Prophet Muḥammad (saw) was asked to seek Allah's will and deny those who created son for him. Furthermore, it strengthens the relationship between the Creator and the creation and the Lord and the servant. No matter at what rank of piety the servant stands, the authority of *kun fayakūn* (Yāsīn:77-83) 'Be and it is' rests with only Allah (swt) and in every matter whether worldly or spiritual, we need to ask for Allah's will and permission. A similar account is given in Sūrah al-Qalam (The Pen) in āyāt- 17-33 in which a parable of *the owners of garden* is told that how they remained unthankful and did not say*'in shā' Allah* and were punished.

After this emblematic proclamation of saying *'in shā' Allah*, the obedience of Allah (swt) and its reward are illustrated through a parable in Sūrat al-Kahf in āyāt (32-44). Here, after making the philosophy of right and wrong clear, Allah (swt) speculates the fable for utter comprehension. In these verses, the story of two men is told that how one of them was blessed with orchards of fruit, vineyards, stream water and abundance of wealth. The rich man argued with his companion about his profuse richness over him and said with a sense of pride that it would never perish and doubted about the dooms day and estimated about his reward better than from this world in the world hereafter if it occurred. But the other man thanked his Creator and warned his companion about the disobedience and disrespect that he showed to the Giver of all the blessings and reminded him about his creation from nothing to being. He further cautioned him about the expected destruction of his belonging within a flash of moment due to his unthankful behaviour. When the calamity impended, he repented for his disbelief and could not find any help from others. In this way, Allah (swt) communicates his message in a very convincing manner. The lesson of morality is best told with this exemplar that how one needs to balance a just proprietorship in the ownership of worldly possessions by avoiding the intrusion of the evil will.

The discussion on the Sūrah with reference to the literary approaches leads us to the fact that Qur'ān is the source of knowledge of the past, guidance for the present and anticipation for the future. It discloses the secrets of success and the fright of the punishments as the consequences of our intentions and deeds.

Conclusion:

The discussion presents a useful insight into the message of Qur'ān with the help of traditional literary approaches. Though, Sūrah al-Kahf is only one chapter out of 114 chapters of Qur'ān yet it encompasses the core message of Allah (swt). The most important reason of the revelation of Qur'ān is the testimony of the oneness of Allah (swt) that is the foundation of the faith. It is well described in the Sūrah. In fact, the text of the Qur'ān is found self-explanatory during the discussion as the historical evidences strengthen the biographical claims. At the beginning of the Sūrah, the Qur'ān is put forth as the sign of the Producer as well as the Creator of the universe. That is to say, the creation and the destruction of the universe are in the mighty Hand of Allah (swt).

Furthermore, the guidance is bestowed only by Allah (swt) and by doing good deeds one will be awarded by the everlasting peace and bad deeds will take the doer into the endless pain. The path to salvation is told in detail that by asking Allah (swt) for the guidance and help one will be blessed with his mercy and blessings. For the philosophical description, stories of *aṣḥāb al-Kahf,* of *Dhu l-Qarnyan,* and of Mūsā (AS) and the parable of the Two Men are narrated through which we get the moral lessons. It is deduced that the firm belief in Allah (swt) and righteous deeds elevate the person's spiritual rank, and as a result in this life s/he enjoys the comfort and ease in the worldly affairs. For instance, *aṣḥāb al-Kahf* were protected from the terror of the cruel pagan ruler as well as the loneliness of the cave and even from the environment and climatic conditions. Similarly, Dhu l-Qarnayn was blessed with the profusion of resources, splendor and control over the horizons of east and west as a reward of his faith and devotedness.

These are only the worldly honors and there are other eternal rewards waiting for the righteous and virtuous people prepared by the Creator. A similar account is concluded by Netton[37] that prodigious presence points out the existence of Allah (swt) and the

revelation when combined by the historical elements in the Sūrah signify *the divine Unity*. Moreover, if the cave is taken as a symbol, it takes us to the Mount *Ḥirā* from where the spread of the light of Islam streamed out. The emblem of the cave also indicates towards the historical migration of Muḥammad (saw) from Makkah to Madina during which he took refuge in the cave of Thawr where he was protected by Allah (swt) from the Quraysh who were after his life. Through the historical reading, we come to know that the cave has a significant role in the Islamic history and faith that promulgates a deep and vast range of meaning in it, such as the oneness of Allah (swt), his command and authority, the moral teaching of obedience to Allah (swt), love and care of his obedient servants, Allah as the source of guidance and ultimate protection, the truth of life after death and the day of judgment, and the asking for the will and permission of Allah (swt).

Correspondingly, Mūsā (AS) wished to meet the knowledgeable person (Khaḍir AS) and Allah (swt) made his wish come true and there he experienced another version of the God-gifted knowledge from which Khaḍir (AS) was blessed. From the story, the will of Allah (swt) and expedience behind apparently unjust incidents of life are communicated. The story illustrates that one need to keep patience during hardships and always trust in the expedience of Allah (swt), which one way or the other is always in the favour of His servants.

Congruently, the parable of The Two Men teaches us the submission to Allah (swt), asking and thanking for the blessings of Allah (swt), uncertainty and mortality of the worldly possessions, learning about Faith as the standard of piety and not wealth and power, the fear of accountability and the Day of Judgment, remembrance of our being from a dust particle, and understanding of our duty to warn and guide others.

The other parables and stories supplement the themes and add in their moral and philosophical value with the help of historical detail. Although, āyāt are discussed in the light of literary approaches in separate sections, yet they are interlinked. Their analysis show that they carry a reciprocal relationship, and to some extent, are interdependent. As a matter of fact, historical approach validated the biographical accounts narrated in the Sūarh that further guided towards the philosophy of the existence of the one and only Allah (swt) as the Creator and the philosophy of good or bad and right and wrong, and the logical reasoning behind the purpose of life, the life and death and the life after death. The philosophical reasoning led towards the morality and ethical teachings. The back and forth movement from one literary approach to another during the discussion highpoints the circular nature of the interpretation that cherishes the eloquence of Qur'ān. Moreover, the lesson imparted by the stories narrated in the Sūrah authenticates the Qur'ān as the source of guidance. The admonishing style of the Qur'ān augments its literariness that can be best comprehended with the help of combination of the literary approaches to meet the goal of interpretation.

The study of the Sūrah provides another dimension to the interpretation of the Qur'ān and the application of literary approaches is found helpful to achieve the objective of the study and suggested for further analysis of the Qur'ān with reference to other Sūrahs.

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